

## **SUMMARY OF THE ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING DECEMBER 7, 1999**

The On-site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Tuesday, December 7, 1999, at 12:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. Steven Baker of the Arizona Department of Health. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The primary purpose of the meeting was to discuss assessor training issues and to prepare for the upcoming Fifth NELAC Interim meeting.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The meeting began with a brief discussion of the proposed acquisition of Quanterra, Inc. by Severn Trent Laboratories. When finalized, this acquisition will result in two On-site Assessment Committee members being employed by the same company. Mr. Baker reminded committee members of the NELAC policy that individuals employed by the same company or the same state government cannot serve on the same committee. The committee deemed this an issue for future discussion.

### **UPDATE ON BASIC ASSESSOR TRAINING COURSE**

Dr. Margot Hunt of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), joined the committee to provide an update on the status of the Basic NELAC Assessor Training Course. She informed the committee that she had summarized and e-mailed their course changes to the contractor. Although most of the deliverables have been received from the contractor, the summary for the last course day and final exam have not yet been received. Dr. Hunt informed the committee that, although she had requested a bank of 500 exam questions, the contractor wrote the work plan for a 100-question bank. Since the contract expires on December 31, 1999, Dr. Hunt has written a memo to the contractor to determine whether the contractor can and will produce the bank of 500 exam questions. Dr. Hunt summarized the work left to be done to provide basic assessor training as follows:

- Review the final product after it is received from the course development contractor
- Determine the course provider(s)
- Monitor the course after it is operational
- Decide whether to update the current Assessor Training Manual or drop it

It was noted that the On-site Assessment Committee does not have the authority to determine the course provider(s).

### **DISCUSSION OF THE UPCOMING FIFTH NELAC INTERIM MEETING**

The committee then entered into discussion of the upcoming interim meeting, to be held December 14-17, 1999, in Washington, DC. Mr. Baker suggested that the committee focus on

assessor training issues on the first day of their two-day meeting period and focus on proposed changes to the NELAC standards and quality systems checklist on the second day. The committee was in general agreement that they have completed the quality systems checklist and Basic NELAC Assessor Training Course, and that the products are consistent with the direction provided by the NELAC Board of Directors. It was noted that if NELAC stakeholders express the need for a different product then they should approach the board to change direction.

## **TECHNICAL ASSESSOR TRAINING COURSES**

The committee revisited the issue of technical course development. It was noted that some NELAC stakeholders desire a combination of systems audit and data audit. Several members of the committee expressed the desire to avoid a situation in which the On-site Assessment Committee labors to develop technical courses only to find out that USEPA has hired a private contractor to develop them. The committee discussed the use of data packages in the technical training final exam. It was agreed that assessors should know something about the analysis. There was considerable discussion of analytical software and its growing flexibility. It was noted that an assessor can look for certain software indications of electronic manipulation of data to distort the hardcopy output. Mr. Baker noted that he has a data package containing an example of such electronic manipulation that he will bring to the interim meeting to share with other committee members.

It was suggested that the On-site Assessment Committee provide the board and the Accrediting Authorities (AA) with detailed outlines of the proposed technical training courses in order to solicit their input on the committee's approach and ask them to prioritize the courses for development. Mr. Baker noted that he would draft a cover letter to the board and to the AAs on behalf of the On-site Assessment Committee. The letter will include the following information:

- The technical course approach will be evenly split between data auditing and systems auditing.
- The final exam will cover both data auditing and systems auditing and will include at least one data package.
- Data package will be tailored to the course discipline.
- Technical courses will be developed in at least the areas of microbiology, asbestos analysis, radiochemistry (radchem), wet chemistry, trace metals, organic chemistry, and inorganic chemistry.
- The On-site Assessment Committee believes that the "Microbiology" course could be developed quickly by expanding the USEPA's existing drinking water microbiology training course.

Mr. Baker noted that he might have a draft of the letter available for committee review at the interim meeting. The committee then discussed each of the afore-mentioned courses in greater detail.

## **MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS**

Mr. Baker informed the committee that he had been notified by Ms. Jeanne Mourrain that the committee should set their teleconference schedule through the summer. The committee tentatively scheduled the following teleconference dates:

January 12, 2000; January 26, 2000; February 16, 2000; March 1, 2000; March 22, 2000; April 12, 2000; April 26, 2000; May 10, 2000; May 24, 2000; June 7, 2000; and June 21, 2000.

It was decided that the 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. time frame should be requested for each call, if available. Mr. Baker will communicate these teleconference requests to USEPA.

There was brief discussion of comments received from the NELAC Field Measurements *ad hoc* Committee. Mr. Baker will e-mail these comments to committee members for their review. Mr. Wayne Davis informed the committee that he had sent a draft letter addressing comments received by the committee from the State of Oklahoma to Ms. Mourrain and Dr. James Pierson for their review. They requested some revisions that Mr. Davis has not yet made. Mr. Charles Dyer informed the committee that he would e-mail a copy of his completed Quality Systems assessment checklist to Ms. Mourrain requesting that she make copies available to participants at the interim meeting.

## **CONCLUSION**

No teleconference was scheduled before the interim meeting. Committee members noted that they would meet for lunch before their meeting. There being no further business to discuss, the committee meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m. EST.

**ACTION ITEMS**  
**ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE TELECONFERENCE**  
**DECEMBER 7, 1999**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date to be Completed</b>
1.	<p>Mr. Baker will draft a letter to the NELAC BoD and AAs on behalf of the On-site Assessment Committee. The letter will include the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The technical course approach will be evenly split between data auditing and systems auditing.</li><li>• The final exam will cover both data auditing and systems auditing and will include at least one data package.</li><li>• Data packages will be tailored to the course discipline.</li><li>• Technical courses will be developed in at least the areas of microbiology, asbestos analysis, radiochemistry (radchem), trace metals, wet chemistry, organic chemistry, and inorganic chemistry.</li><li>• The On-site Assessment Committee proposes that the microbiology course be developed fairly quickly.</li></ul>	12/15/99
2.	<p>Mr. Baker will request the following teleconference dates of USEPA: January 12, 2000; January 26, 2000; February 16, 2000; March 1, 2000; March 22, 2000; April 12, 2000; April 26, 2000; May 10, 2000; May 24, 2000; June 7, 2000; and June 21, 2000.</p>	12/10/99
3.	<p>Mr. Baker will e-mail comments received from the NELAC Field Measurements Committee to On-site Assessment Committee members.</p>	12/10/99
4.	<p>Mr. Davis will revise the letter communicating the On-site Assessment Committee's response to comments received from the State of Oklahoma.</p>	12/14/99
5.	<p>Mr. Dyer will e-mail completed Quality Systems Checklist to Ms. Jeanne Mourrain for duplication for the Fifth NELAC Interim meeting.</p>	12/07/99

**PARTICIPANTS**  
**ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE TELECONFERENCE**  
**DECEMBER 7, 1999**

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